

# Michigan's Plan for Great Lakes Protection and Restoration

## **Background**

The Great Lakes are Michigan's natural resource treasures. They shape our state, our lives and our economy. But these treasures demand increased attention at the state, local, and national levels. In response to this need, the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes (OGL) and Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) will lead an effort to prepare and begin implementation of an action agenda to protect, remediate, and restore the Great Lakes.

This new effort builds upon the tremendous investment of time, passion, and money this state has made to protect, restore, and remediate the forces that continue to threaten the health of the Great Lakes. Michigan has been a leader within the Great Lakes region in protecting these spectacular waters. State and local units of governments have invested billions of dollars towards this effort. We have nurtured a sport fishery that is unrivaled in the world. Michigan was the first Great Lakes state to ban the discharge of ballast water at out ports. Visitors come from far and wide to play on our state and local beaches, launch their boats at publicly owned access sites, and camp in the state parks that line our shoreline. These and other actions that have been undertaken are highlighted in the State of the Great Lakes report at:

([http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/deq-ogl-StateGLRpt2007\\_219068\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/deq-ogl-StateGLRpt2007_219068_7.pdf)).

Each segment of a stream is supported from and dependent upon the land within its watershed. The efforts to restore the Michigan's waters will recognize the importance of looking to our rivers and nearshore areas as the vital link between the state's watersheds and the health of the Great Lakes. In addition, the efforts of state and local watershed groups to protect and restore the watersheds within the Great Lakes will be recognized and celebrated.

## **Michigan Great Lakes Protection and Restoration Plan**

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy reflects the restoration and protection efforts needed throughout the Great Lakes Basin. The Michigan Great Lakes Protection and Restoration Plan will provide specific direction within Michigan to address the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) and to take further steps to address the specific needs within the State.

A key component of the effort will be to stress that the health of the Great Lakes is dependent on the health of the waters that feed the lakes, and the near-shore areas that buffer the lakes. Where possible, the Michigan Great Lakes restoration efforts will focus on improving the health of our coastal areas, controlling aquatic invasive species, restoring the 14 Michigan Areas of Concern, controlling nonpoint sources, and reducing the effects of toxic pollutants.

### **Great Lakes Governors' Priorities**

In 2003, looking towards a vision that the Great Lakes will be the premier freshwater resource in the world and will sustain a healthy environment, strong economy, and high quality of life long into the future, the Great Lakes Governors adopted nine priorities that embody the goals of protecting and restoring the natural habitat and water quality of the Great Lakes Basin, preserving diverse plant and animal communities, protecting the water supply, and safeguarding human health. Acknowledging that the state and local entities have already invested and will continue to invest significant resources in efforts designed to attain these goals, the Great Lakes Governors asked that the federal government also make a long-term, large-scale financial commitment to the Great Lakes.

## Michigan Great Lakes Protection and Restoration Plan Development

The Michigan Great Lakes Protection and Restoration Plan will use the Great Lakes Governor's priority areas as a framework and build on the recommendations of the GLRC. The eight restoration priority areas are:

- **Aquatic Invasive Species**
- **Habitat/Species**
- **Coastal Health**
- **Areas of Concern/Sediments**
- **Nonpoint Source**
- **Toxic Pollutant**
- **Indicators and Information**
- **Sustainable Development** (including sustainable energy and assuring a strong economy)

The Michigan Great Lakes Protection and Restoration Plan development process includes:

- Development of action frameworks for each of the restoration initiatives. The action framework will include identifying recommendations taking into consideration available funding and the recommendations of the recently released MUCC report, *Michigan's Role in Great Lakes Protection and Restoration; Analysis and Recommendations* which includes a gap analysis comparison of the GLRC Strategy recommendations and Michigan's current activities, programs and policies.
- Key stakeholders have been invited to expand upon the action frameworks and to assist in identifying specific efforts that should be included in the final Michigan Plan.
- Recognizing the importance of local watershed efforts, a series of geographically focused input sessions will be held.
- At the conclusion of the input sessions, a final Michigan Protection and Restoration Plan will be prepared.

As part of the process, we will be celebrating heroes throughout the state recognizing the tremendous local work that is occurring at the watershed level to restore, remediate, and protect the Great Lakes. Also, once the Michigan Protection and Restoration Plan has been completed, an Implementation Team will be developed to assist state and local efforts to implement the recommendations of the Michigan Plan.

For more information on Michigan's Great Lakes protection and restoration effort, please contact:

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## Great Lakes Regional Collaboration

In response, the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) was initiated through the issuance of a Presidential Executive Order calling for improved federal coordination and efficiency of Great Lakes programs through the initiation of "a regional collaboration of national significance" to create a national action agenda for Great Lakes. Michigan and others joined the GLRC in the belief that an additional long term, large scale federal funding commitment is necessary to address restoration goals. The GLRC culminated with the release of the GLRC Strategy (<http://www.glrc.us>) in December, 2005. The report provides specific restoration strategies and recommendations for the Great Lakes restoration priorities.